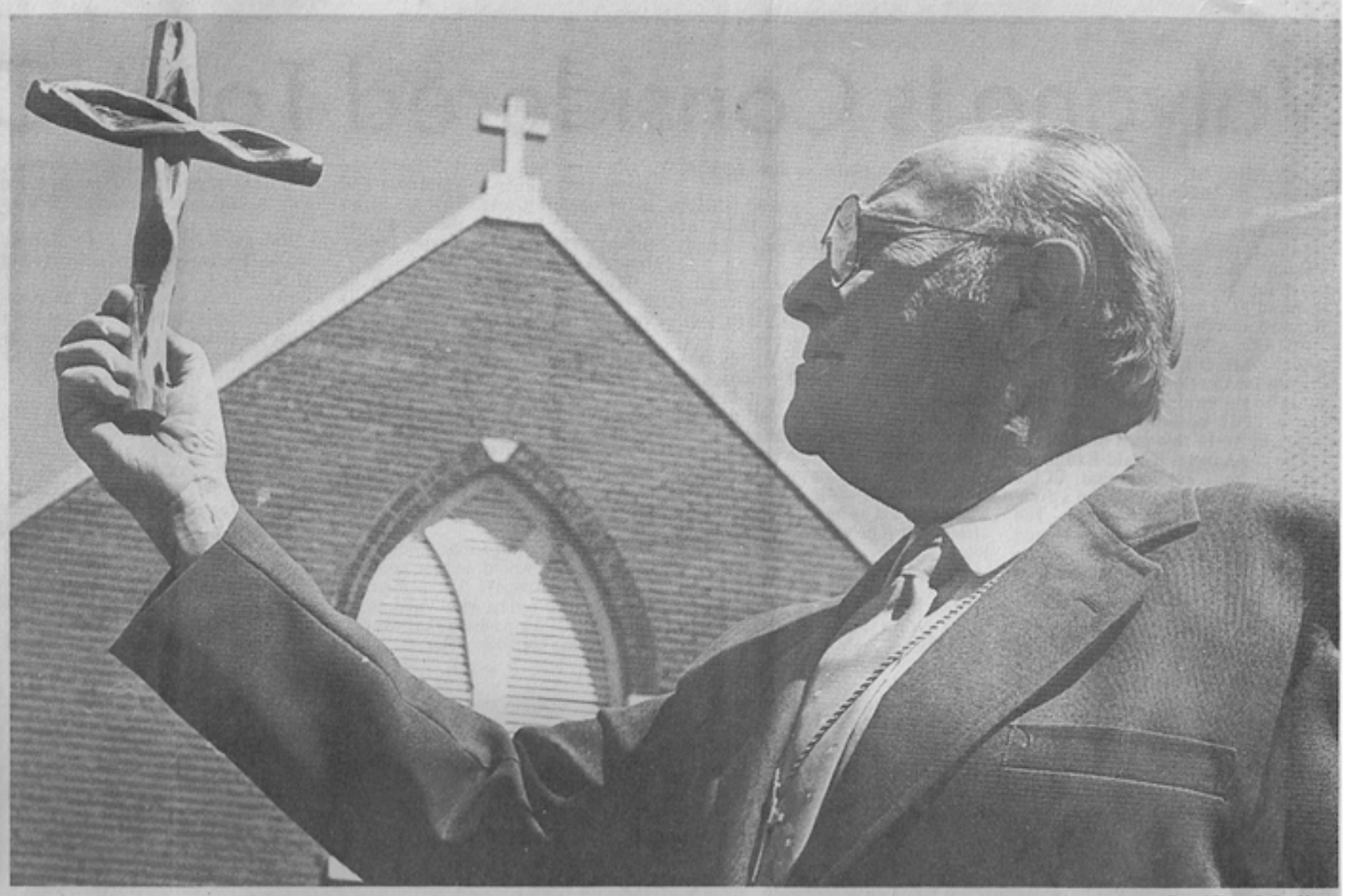
HICKORY DAILY RECORD

Spanish Cross Includes 5 Picture Panels



Record Photos By Reg Moore

Stiver Admires Alaskan Diamond Willow Or 'Miracle Tree' Cross, Created By Parasites

'Cross Symbol 'Of New Life 'To Christians

By REG MOORE
Record Staff Writer

The flowers of spring blooming throughout the Unifour symbolize new life breaking forth from the earth.

From the purple violets rising through green lawns, to the resplendent glory of yellow forsythia, the signs of new life are everywhere.

Although the cross was where Jesus was crucified, it also symbolizes the resurrection of the Son of God, through whom all people can seek a new life.

According to the Rev. David McKee, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Hickory, "the resurrection testifies to the reality of eternity, and introduces that reality into our lives here and now."

For the Rev. Stanley Stiver of Claremont, the cross has become an obsession. The pastor of St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church for the past 29 years, he has collected 600 crosses from around the world, mostly during trips with his wife, Mary Jane.

"The cross is the triumph of Christianity," he said. "A risen Christ is what really makes our Christianity."

Sunday, Christians around the world will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ — some amid symbols such as crosses and Easter lilies.

Since the time when Jesus died on a simple wooden cross at Calvary, the cross has become a universally recognized symbol of Christianity.

Although most of the crosses in Stiver's collection are mounted, he has one on a ring on his finger, and another on a gold chain around his neck.

He told the Record that the cross on his ring has been a catalyst for conversations about Christ when he has been amongst strangers. He said the solid gold one around his neck was a gift in 1987 from his congregation in celebration of his 40th year of ministry.

He said members of his congregation, whom he has served for 29 years, had old gold melted down and formed into a gold cross.

"They knew how much the cross meant to me," he said.

Although he collected most of the crosses during vacation travels, he said he has had other unusual sources.

A woman in Nebraska had heard of his collection from a story in a church magazine, so she sent him a silver cross that was used in her grandmother's funeral in 1903. And a man from California who was visiting Claremont found out about the Stiver collection and arranged shipment of a willow cross from his brother in Alaska.

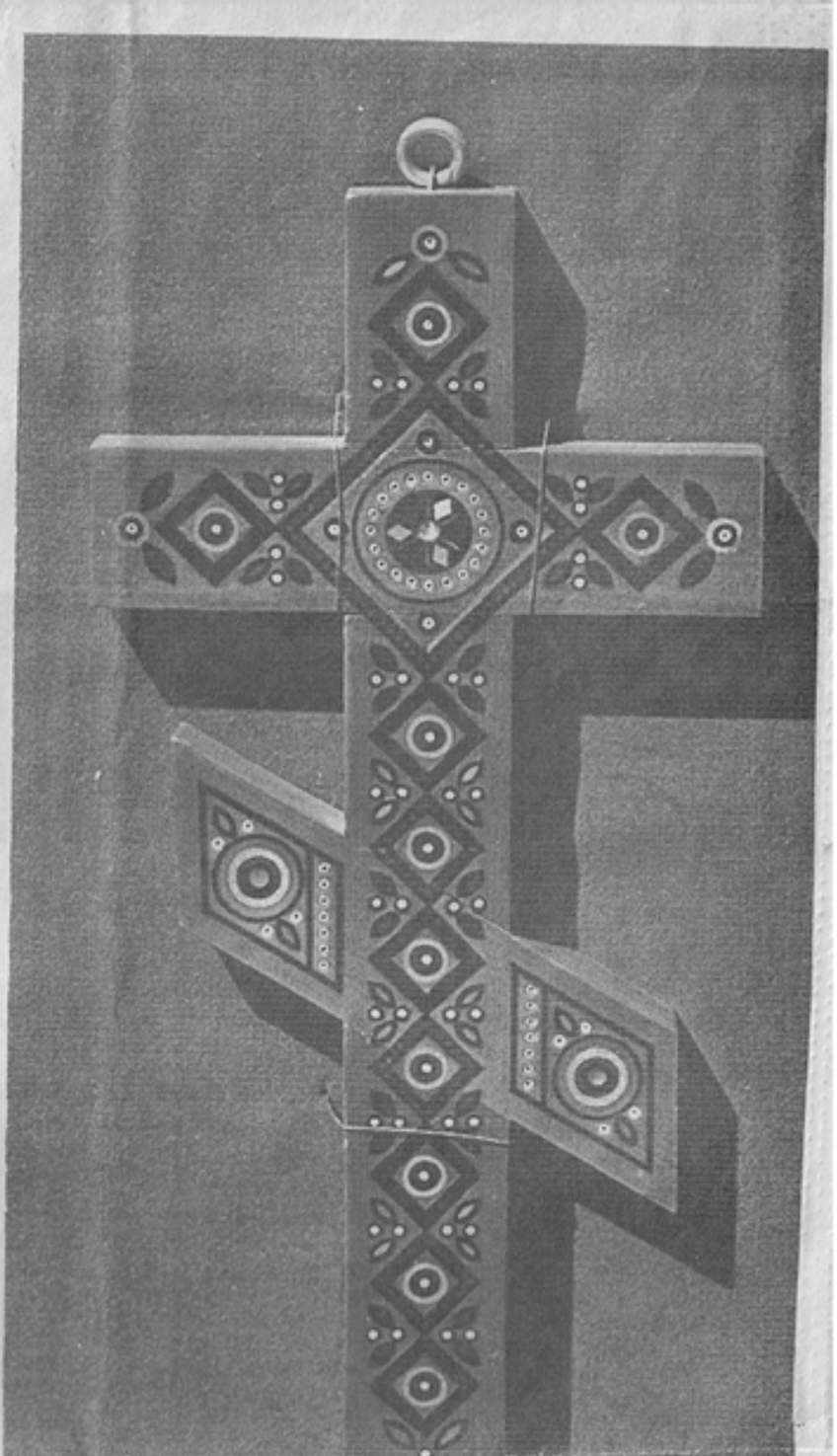
Other crosses in his collection range from an olive wood cross he got at the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem to a Chinese cross his son David sent from San Francisco.

Some are hand-carved, as in the case of the Oberammergau crucifix carving, while the ones from El Salvador are hand-painted.

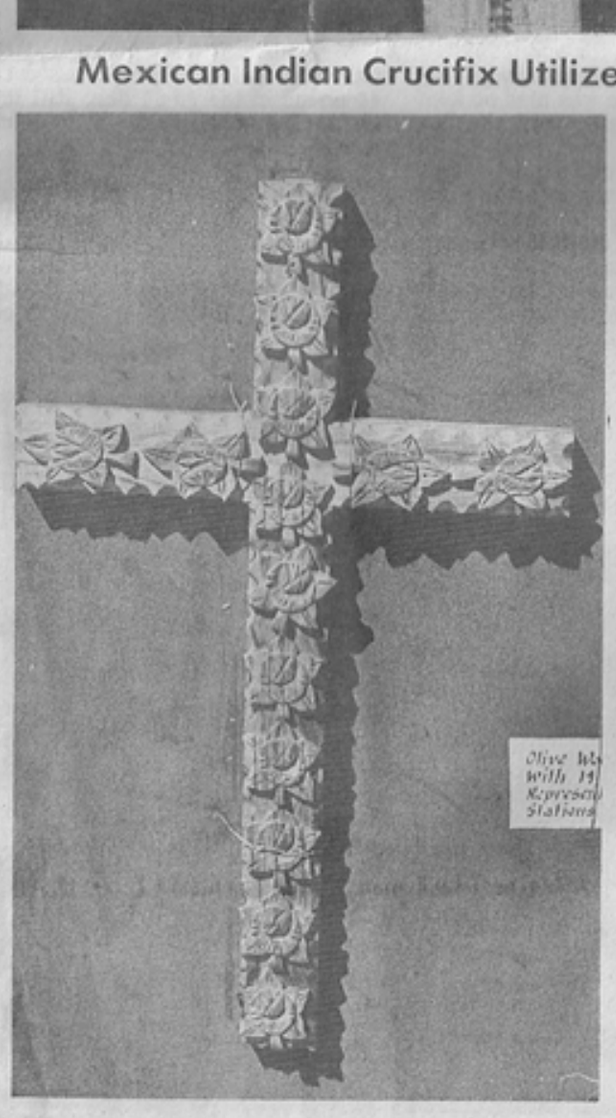
Materials vary from straw in Mexico to hard sandstone in Ireland, but whatever the material or technique, each cross stands as a work of art telling something about the culture of the people who produced it.

Stiver also has a wide collection of Nativity scenes from around the world, each telling a cultural story of the birth of the baby Jesus.

Mexican Indian Crucifix Utilizes Straw



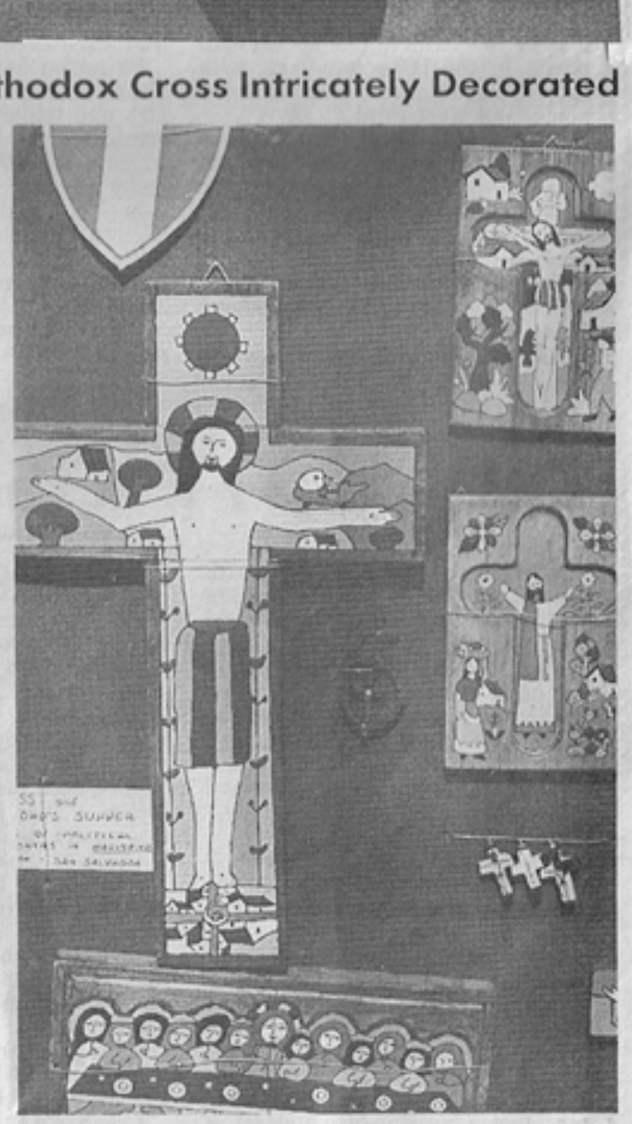
Russian Orthodox Cross Intricately Decorated



Roses Adorn Olive Wood Cross

Figure From Tanzania, Africa

Replica Of St. Francis' Cross



Colored El Salvador Crosses